‘To make Europe is to make Peace!’ from L’Aveyron Libre (17 January 1948)

Caption: On 17 January 1948, in the weekly publication L'Aveyron Libre, mouthpiece of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), Paul Ramadier, former French Prime Minister, gives an account of the policy pursued since the end of the Second World War by the French authorities in favour of European unity.

Source: L'Aveyron libre. 17.01.1948. Rodez. "Faire l’Europe c’est faire la Paix !", auteur:Ramadier, Paul , p. 1-2.

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To build Europe is to build peace!

by Paul Ramadier

In an article published in *COMBAT*, Claude Bourdet commented on the radio broadcast made by Paul Ramadier on 31 December 1947. Endorsing the trends identified in the speech that his counterparts in Great Britain, Belgium, Italy and Czechoslovakia had also endorsed, Mr Bourdet, Editor of *COMBAT*, asked what action the Ramadier Government had taken in this regard.

Paul Ramadier gave his reply in the following letter:

'Dear Sir,

I should like to thank you for the article that you wrote about our 'open-air discussion'. The ideas on which we reached agreement were justified and clarified by you in a manner that made them more vivid and more forceful. These ideas need to become firmly established in the minds of the general public for them to take practical shape; the efforts of a few government leaders will not suffice.

Moreover, you are perhaps being a little unfair to government leaders when you leave unanswered the question of our contribution to the European venture. You asked: 'What has Mr Ramadier done to infuse into our foreign policy the European aspirations that informed the speech that he made the day before yesterday? What about the actions of Mr Bevin, compared with whom the Conservative, Mr Sandys, comes across as a pioneer?'

Allow me to attempt to answer your questions.

Towards the end of his government, Léon Blum had laid the foundations of a Franco-British agreement, a genuine pact of alliance against Germany. In the hands of Georges Bidault and his colleagues, this draft became a fully-fledged Treaty. Together with the Franco-Soviet Treaty and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, IT WEAVED THE FABRIC OF A FAR-REACHING EUROPEAN SECURITY AGREEMENT.

The Treaty had not yet been concluded when we entered into negotiations with Poland and Czechoslovakia in order to revive, in a new form, the old treaties, which have now partially lapsed, that united us with these nations. The negotiations were very close to being successfully concluded, and the Czechoslovak and Polish people are certain to have followed the joint efforts with enthusiasm, efforts which have not been discontinued. In June, at least, we concluded a trade agreement with Poland that lays the foundations for lasting cooperation.

When George C. Marshall delivered his famous speech back in June, the French Government immediately demonstrated its keen interest, not only in the provision of US aid but also in the principle of economic cooperation between European nations. It was for the purpose of determining the nature and extent of this cooperation that the French and British Governments invited the Soviet Government to a consultation with them in Paris. WE CAME UP AGAINST STRONG OPPOSITION, much more so, incidentally, to the idea of a European agreement than to the use of US funding, and we were forced to convene the nations of Europe without the Soviet Union being present. Its overt hostility prevented Czechoslovakia and Poland from participating in the Paris Conference and created uncertainty for other countries, albeit less closely associated with Russia. Nevertheless, we declared that a place was reserved for the nations of Eastern Europe, that they could, when they were ready, join us at the negotiating table, and that Europe could not be achieved without them.

However, 16 nations did attend, concerned about the Soviet stance, sensing the need for an agreement but also sensing some kind of threat hanging over such an agreement. They were fearful. We were insistent, in agreement with the representatives of the United States. Our proposals, brilliantly defended by our delegate, were ultimately accepted. Thanks to these proposals, the report of the Sixteen is not a mere catalogue of demands: it includes the beginnings, the first, tentative beginnings, but the beginnings, nonetheless, of a

European Union.

From this has emerged the idea of a customs agreement in preparation for a second stage envisaging the establishment of a Customs Union. This has been provided for in the Geneva Agreement. The Benelux countries, to whom France has been proposing closer economic ties since 1945, and Italy, with whom preliminary studies are being carried out, have welcomed the idea. The economic discussions that got off to a difficult start with Great Britain became more focused and more amenable in November.

Tomorrow, the Sixteen will meet again. We can be hopeful that all is set for a new step forward.

I agree that the pace at which progress is being made is not as fast as we should like. However, the old Europe is littered with ruins, locked behind its borders and inundated by threats. Perhaps we should assume that, in the light of this situation, it is safer to move forward cautiously than to ride in with guns blazing.

However, I beseech you to keep forging ahead, for TO BUILD EUROPE IS TO BUILD PEACE.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Ramadier’